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Congress of the United States
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 2, 1982

OCS

The Honorable Thomas O. Enders
Assistant Secretary of State
for Inter-American Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The United States Embassy in San Salvador is aware of two letters, one dated September 25 the other December 9, from an individual or individuals purporting to be in possession of evidence concerning Mr. John Sullivan, a free-lance journalist who disappeared in San Salvador last January.

We would appreciate it if you could provide us with a chronology indicating the actions which the Embassy has taken in response to these letters, and a description of any other events which have occurred in recent months which have a bearing on the Sullivan case.

We are particularly interested in learning of the efforts which the Embassy has taken to ascertain the validity of these letters, and to facilitate the acquisition of information which might resolve the mystery surrounding Mr. Sullivan's disappearance. We would also like to know if the two letters have been submitted by the State Department for a handwriting analysis in order to determine whether they were written by the same man. Finally, we would like further elaboration of the statements made by Ambassador Hinton in the enclosed transcript. Why, for example, is the September 25 letter characterized as "an attempt by somebody to extort some money", when the text of the letter explicitly disclaims any interest in financial compensation?

We want to thank you in advance for your interest and cooperation in this request.

Sincerely,

REVIEWED BY [illegible] DATE 3/9/84
RDS-[illegible] XD TEXT. DATE ____
TS AUTH. ____ REASON(S) ____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED RELEASABLE ☒
RELEASE DENIED ☐
FA or FOI EXEMPTIONS ____

DECLASSIFIED

The Honorable Thomas O. Enders
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[signature]
[illegible] Solarz

[signature]
Benjamin A. Gilman

[signature]
Robert J. Lagomarsino

[signature]
William Goodling

[signature]
Jim Leach

[signature]
Dan Mica

SUBJECT: NEW JOHN J. SULLIVAN

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST, THE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS OF AMBASSADOR HINTON'S INTERVIEW PERTAINING TO THE SULLIVAN CASE:

"Q. WHAT ABOUT THE JOHN SULLIVAN CASE, THE JOURNALIST THAT DISAPPEARED LAST YEAR?

A. THE SEARCH CONTINUES BUT THERE HAS BEEN ABSOLUTELY NO SOLID INDICATION OF WHAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM FOR OVER A YEAR.

Q. ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH REPORTS THAT A LETTER ALLEGEDLY EXISTS FROM A SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES DEFECTOR WHICH SAYS THAT SULLIVAN WAS KILLED BY SECURITY FORCES BY MISTAKE?

A. YES.

Q. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT ONE?

A. THAT LETTER WAS TRACED DOWN AND IT LOOKED LIKE IT WAS AN ATTEMPT BY SOMEBODY TO EXTORT SOME MONEY. AND WE DID NOT VIEW IT AS A SOLID LEAD. BUT IT WAS TRACED VERY CAREFULLY.

Q. HAS THAT LETTER BEEN DISCREDITED THEN?

A. ON THE BASIS OF WHAT HAPPENED AS WE PURSUED THAT LEAD I WOULD SAY IT WAS DISCREDITED.

Q. WERE YOU IN POSSESION OF THAT LETTER?

A. OH YES, SURE.

Q. AND DO THE PARENTS NOW HAVE THAT LETTER?

A. I JUST DON'T KNOW, I THINK THE PARENTS WERE INFORMED IN A GENERAL WAY OF WHAT WAS GOING ON AT THAT TIME, BUT I AM NOT CERTAIN OF IT.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHEN THAT LETTER WAS RECEIVED?

A. THREE OR FOUR MONTHS AGO ORIGINALLY, I BELIEVE. WE HAVE PURSUED LEADS ON ALL OF THESE CASES WITH ALL OF THE VIGOR WE COULD MUSTER. THE POOR VICE-CONSUL HERE HAS PERSONALLY INVESTIGATED AND BEEN PRESENT ON I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY BODIES HAVE BEEN DUG UP, WHEN WE HAVE INDICATIONS THAT IT MIGHT BE THE BODY OF JOHN SULLIVAN. THE DENTAL WORK HAS ALWAYS INDICATED THAT IT WAS NOT JOHN SULLIVAN, BUT WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THIS CASE IS ABSOLUTELY STAGGERING.

Q. DID THE LETTER MENTION THAT SULLIVAN HAD BEEN KILLED BY SECURITY FORCES?

A. THERE WAS A LETTER THAT SAID THAT, YES. THERE ARE LOTS OF LETTERS THAT SAY LOTS OF THINGS IN THIS COUNTRY; WE PURSUED THAT ONE AND I AM PERSONALLY PERSUADED THAT IT WAS A FALSE LEAD. PROBABLY WRITTEN AND STARTED TO, SORT OF A MACABRE ATTEMPT TO GET SOME MONEY OUT SOMEBODY."

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MEMORANDUM

Ed:

Per our phone conversation.

Cindy Sprunger
Sub. on Human Rights and IO's
225-5319